

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 17 April 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
17 APRIL 1968

1. South Vietnam

Tran Van Huong, President Thieu's choice to succeed Prime Minister Loc, is apparently still undecided about the offer. [REDACTED]

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2. Korea

Our analysts believe that Pyongyang may be planning a substantial increase in its guerrilla activity against the South. Unlike last year, when the bulk of the North's agent activity was in espionage and the establishment of guerrilla bases, the Communists may now focus on ambitious terrorist incidents similar to the raid on the presidential residence in January.

Prior to the ambush of US personnel near the Demilitarized Zone on Sunday, the situation in that area had been relatively quiet since the January raid. The recent ambush was deliberately planned; it was not a chance encounter between infiltrating agents and security patrols. This suggests that Pyongyang now sees less need for caution and that, with the improvement in weather, the level of guerrilla operations will probably rise.

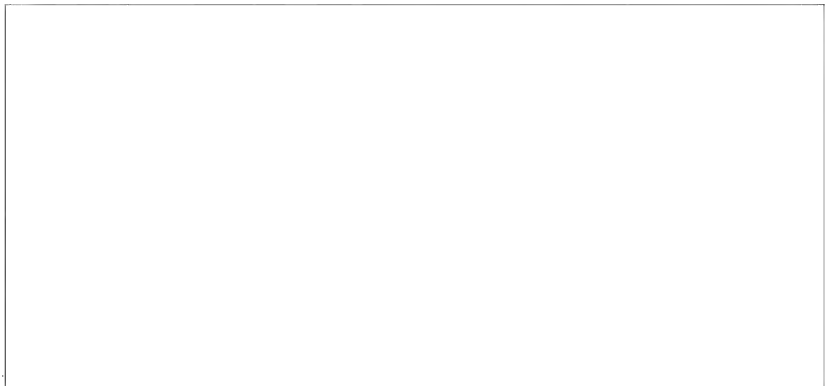
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3. Thailand

Prime Minister Thanom has told Ambassador Unger he is worried that the US will pull out of Vietnam and Southeast Asia sooner than expected and under circumstances which will leave Thailand in a "precarious position." Thanom is particularly worried about Thailand's "profound commitment" in letting the US use Thai airbases. He is apparently convinced that even if there is a successful conclusion to the war, Thailand will soon bear the brunt of Chinese and North Vietnamese aggression.

Thanom implied that he is not being cut in on Washington's position regarding negotiations and on plans for the ground war over the next few months. He hopes to discuss these matters with President Johnson when he visits Washington next month.

4. West Berlin



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5. West Germany

The students took a breather last night--West German cities were quiet. The prediction is that the demonstrations will probably start up again tonight.

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6. Egypt

Nasir says that his domestic problems rule out any real negotiations with Israel. [REDACTED]

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Equally important in the back of Nasir's mind is the fact that Saudi Arabia will cut off its Egyptian subsidies if Nasir agrees to negotiate.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

New Appointments in Hanoi: Hanoi announced two government appointments on 15 April, and one of them may reflect preparations for possible talks. This was the naming of a former foreign minister, Xuan Thuy, as "minister in the North Vietnamese Government" without a specific portfolio. Xuan Thuy served as foreign minister from 1963 to April 1965, when Hanoi announced that he was being replaced because of his health. He was then out of public view for more than a year. He re-emerged as host for foreign delegations visiting Hanoi. In some cases he has been a member of the official North Vietnamese delegation participating in talks with these foreigners.

Xuan Thuy is a member of the second echelon of the North Vietnamese Communist Party--a full Central Committeeman. He is well traveled for a North Vietnamese, having served as deputy head of the North Vietnamese delegation to the Geneva Conference on Laos in 1962. He would be a good candidate for Hanoi's delegation in talks with the US, but probably only after they became substantive discussions. Hanoi has made clear that the initial "contact" is to be at the ambassadorial level. Xuan Thuy's new government rank suggests he would not be used for this preliminary mission.

The second government appointment announced by Hanoi on 15 April does not appear to be related to the peace talk dialogue. Tran Quang Huy is a party propaganda expert, whose foreign affairs experience seems limited to relations with other Communist parties. His new government job involves direction of domestic "culture and education" programs. It appears to be a routine appointment to a previously vacant post.

Extra International Control Commission Flights:
Hanoi may have asked the International Control Commission if commission aircraft could be made available for special flights, presumably to transport a North Vietnamese delegation to preliminary peace talks. The commission's assistant secretary general for administration in Saigon approached the US Embassy on 15 April to ask how much advance notice would be required to schedule extra flights from Hanoi to Vientiane, "in case Hanoi might want to use the ICC aircraft to transport their delegation to Vientiane." He pointed out that Hanoi might want more prompt service than was provided by the commission's six regular flights per month. Although he did not indicate that his request was prompted by any query from Hanoi, the US Embassy is inclined to believe that it might have been. The delegation could conceivably proceed from Vientiane to other locations by commercial transport.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Liberation Front Letter: An official of the Liberation Front has addressed a special letter to "US writers, artists, and cultural workers" on the occasion of a proposed 10-day "antiwar struggle" in the US. The letter was broadcast over Liberation radio on 15 April. It thanked the people of the US for their opposition to the war and to official US policy on Vietnam, and called President Johnson's limitation of the bombing a "tricky peace" effort designed to hide a new escalation of the war. The Vietnamese people always make a clear distinction between the American people as a whole and the war planners in the Pentagon and the White House, said the letter, and the Liberation Front hoped the people would continue to support Communist terms for a political settlement of the war.

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Propaganda: Hanoi propaganda is losing no opportunity to score the US for "lack of good faith" and "delaying tactics" in the selection of a site for preliminary talks. This line is being put out daily for the benefit of both domestic and foreign audiences. North Vietnamese propagandists are reaching back into the US press for early quotes

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on US willingness to meet with Hanoi and are relying primarily on non-Vietnamese criticism of the President to reinforce their case.

A commentary on 15 April cited Senator McCarthy and the influential Japanese newspaper Manichi as typical of the widespread criticism of the US refusal to accept Phnom Penh and Warsaw. In a Nhan Dan editorial of the 16th, Hanoi claimed that neither of these cities represented any real difficulty for the US, since both the Cambodian and the Polish governments had assured the US that "favorable conditions would be created."

Domestic commentary highlights the assertion that in addition to delaying on the issue of a site, the US is "strengthening the war in the South" and launching big military operations. A North Vietnamese daily editorial on 15 April told the people that now was the time for extra efforts. The "new situation" called for taking advantage of every opportunity, according to the editorial; it opened up "bright prospects" but required "every minute and every breath to develop militant strength."

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